

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RESURRECTION WHEN FACING DEATH (Easter 2023)**

Whenever someone dies, that person dies believing something. If the mind is working, they die thinking something is going to happen to me. Some people seem to face death happy, content and hopeful. Other people face death scared. Other people face death mad and angry. Some people face death saying they don't know what to believe. But all who face death believe something.

Some people believe in heaven - most believe in heaven but argue about how to get there.  
Some people believe in hell - many believe in a punishment place for the bad people.  
Some people believe in Purgatory - go someplace for a while to pay for sins before heaven.  
Some people believe in reincarnation - soul takes residency in bird, butterfly, animal, insect.  
Some people believe in nothing - their faith is they don't know what to think or believe.  
All people die believing something.

Most people die quietly, not talking too much. Most of the time when someone dies they don't say anything. Their body is shutting down and most die in silence. But all die believing something in their hearts and minds.

When it comes our turn to die we will believe in something. The question is what? What is it that you want to believe in when it is your turn to die? What should we believe? How should we think?

Years ago, when we were in Grand Rapids, I went to visit a man in the hospital who was dying. I really liked this guy. He was an old black man but we became friends and he got sick and was dying. I went to visit him. He knew he didn't have long to live. As I sat with him, he started to cry and he said I hope I have been good enough to make it. I have done some things in life for which I am ashamed. I have no hope, I have no hope. I said to my friend, "Didn't you tell me that many years ago when you were in Washington DC you went to a tent meeting and trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior?" He said, "Yes, I did." I said, "Did you trust Jesus Christ as your Savior?" He said, "Yes, I did." I said, "Then you are placing your hope in the wrong person. Quit looking at yourself and quit looking at what you did or didn't do and look to Jesus Christ. He is our Savior. And He is our hope. You never want to look at yourself because you can't save yourself. Look to the only One who can save you. Keep your faith riveted on Him."

**WHEN IT COMES TIME FOR US TO DIE, WE WILL BELIEVE SOMETHING AND THE ONLY HOPE WE HAVE IS TO BELIEVE IN THE RESURRECTED JESUS CHRIST.**

**If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, where there is death, there is hope and this passage gives you that hope.**

Now the critical question here is why should we believe in Jesus Christ when we die? The answer to that question is this - **He is the only Person who was raised from the dead which means He is the only Person who can give us eternal life.**

**One of the most important chapters in the New Testament that absolutely proves this point is John 11.**

**This is the last of the seven major miracles in John that Jesus performs before He dies.** It is interesting that only John records this miracle. One probable reason why Matthew, Mark and Luke did not record this is because Lazarus was still alive when they wrote their gospels and was dead when John wrote his gospel. Had they included the story, when Lazarus was still alive, the religious Jews would have probably tracked him down and killed him to discredit Jesus' miracle.

In **John 11:1-5** a messenger comes to Jesus and His disciples who were about 20 miles away from where Lazarus was and tells Him that Lazarus is sick. The word that John uses for "sick" is a word that means Lazarus was sick to the point that he had absolutely no strength in his body. He must have been bedridden.

Mary and Martha, who were Lazarus' sisters, sent this messenger to go get Jesus because he was so sick (**11:3**). They needed Jesus there and wanted Him there.

Jesus loved Lazarus and He loved Mary and Martha. The word "love" used in **verse 3** indicates that the messenger realized that Lazarus was Jesus' close friend. The word "love" used in **verse 5** for Mary, Martha and Lazarus is agape, which means Jesus loved them at the highest possible level. These were special friends to Jesus and He loved them.

When He was told Lazarus was sick, He intentionally stayed two more days where He was (**v. 6**) and He told His disciples that this sickness was for the glory of God to be displayed by the Son of God (**11:4**).

Now typically when we pray we want immediate answers. We want answers right now. **God does things on His time clock and He does it on His time schedule for His Glory.**

**It is important to see here that godly people who are dear friends of God do get sick and they do die.**

After two more days, Jesus started walking the 20 miles to Bethany and He told His disciples that Lazarus, their friend, is dead (**11:11-14**).

**Then He says in verse 15, I am glad I was not there because you need to learn a lesson about what to believe in when it comes to the subject of life and death.**

**Lazarus is dead (v. 14); Jesus is glad (v. 15) and the people are sad. Thomas was willing to die with Jesus (v. 16).**

**By the time Jesus got to Bethany, Lazarus had been dead four days (11:17, 39).** This is critical because this four days of being buried in a tomb eliminates the possibility of being in a coma or deep sleep.

**There is no other person who has ever gone into a cemetery to do what He will do four days after someone has been buried. You need to see this and understand this and believe this.**

According to **verses 20-28**, when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet Jesus and said **if you would have been here my brother, Lazarus, would not have died (v. 21).**

Many people think in terms of “if only.”

- 1) If only I hadn’t done this, this would not have happened.
- 2) If only I had been raised better, I would be better.
- 3) If only I hadn’t moved, things would have been better for me.
- 4) If only I had this or that, life would be better.

Here is an important point to see. Take your “if only’s” to the Lord and talk to Him about them. Don’t talk to other people, talk to God (**vs. 21-22**).

Martha said, “If you had been here my brother would not have died, but I do know that whatever you ask of God, God will give You.”

Jesus answered Martha with five responses:

**(Response #1) - Your brother shall rise again. 11:23**

**(Response #2) - I AM the resurrection and the life. 11:25a**

**(Response #3) - The one who believes in ME shall live, even if he dies. 11:25b**

**(Response #4) - Everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. 11:26a**

**(Response #5) - Do you believe this (11:26b)?**

**Do you believe that the key to having life when facing death is believing in Jesus Christ?**

What did Jesus mean when He said the one who believes in Me will never die? He means when they die they have life and go somewhere else to live.

**In other words, Jesus is saying that what you want to believe in when you face death is Me. Don’t believe in religion. Don’t believe in yourself. Don’t believe in your works. Don’t believe in what you have or have not done. Believe in Me.**

Martha said in **verse 27**, Yes, Lord I believe you are the Lord, the Christ and the Son of God.

Next, it’s Mary’s turn (**11:29-33**). **When Martha left Jesus, she called for Mary (v. 28).**

She told her that “the teacher” was there and was asking for her. Mary immediately got up and went out to meet Jesus as He was coming to the city (**11:29-30**).

A bunch of religious Jews saw her leave and started following her thinking she was going to the tomb to weep (**11:31**).

When Mary got to Jesus, she fell down at His feet and said Lord if you would have been here my brother would not have died (v. 32).

She was at His feet weeping and according to **verse 33** the Jews with her were also weeping (v. 33).

Everyone at this scene is weeping because Lazarus died and they don't understand that Jesus Christ is the One who gives life to one dead.

Now as Jesus saw this, **verse 33** says He was "deeply moved in spirit and was troubled." The Greek words "deeply moved" and "troubled" are critical to the interpretation of this.

The words "deeply moved" (embrimaomai) means to be emotionally moved toward anger (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 149). He is getting mad because no one here realizes He is the One to trust when facing death.

The word "troubled" (tarassw) means to be troubled and stirred because things are out of order and not right (*Ibid.*, p. 440).

**Jesus is very upset here because He is about to die as the God/Savior/Messiah/King and these people who are facing the death of a loved one don't think He can do anything about death.**

These people should have been realizing in moments of death we need to trust in Jesus Christ because He is the key to life. Jesus is our Savior.

According to **verse 34**, He asked where have you laid Lazarus. He knows where they put him, but He wants everyone travelling with Him to see this.

When He got to the tomb, Jesus wept (**John 11:35**). He wept because in this moment of the death of a loved one the people did not believe in Him. The word "weep" here is one that means Jesus is just quietly shedding tears; the one used for the people in **verse 33** means those people were loudly wailing.

Those Jews think He is weeping because He loves Lazarus (v. 36). He is not weeping for that reason. **He is weeping because these people don't believe in Him in facing this death.**

In **verse 37** some of the Jews said this man who can open blind people's eyes could have kept this person from dying.

Again Jesus was deeply moved and getting angry (v. 38).

Jesus came to the tomb and he told the people to remove the stone (v. 39).

Martha said well he has been dead three days and there will be a real death stench to the body (v. 39).

Jesus said did I not tell you that if you would believe in Me you would see the glory of God (v. 40). **Jesus says the one you want to believe in at death is Him. If you will believe in Him in death “you will see the glory of God.”**

In **verses 41-42** Jesus prays. He raises His eyes toward heaven and does not bow His head or close His eyes. He wants the people to see this and hear this and we need to see it and hear it too:

1. God is Jesus’ Father; He is God’s only begotten Son.
2. God always hears the prayers of Jesus Christ.
3. He is praying this prayer publicly so these people would realize You sent Me here as the second member of the Trinity and as Your Son they would believe.

**Verse 43** says He then said, **“Lazarus, come forth.”**

Jesus says in **verse 44** “Unbind him, and let him go.”

Those are critical words. Because according to Paul, He says that we were dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1, 5), but God in His grace made us alive, just as He did Lazarus and unbinds us from our sin and guilt and sets us free.

Now back to our point. When it comes time for each of us to die, we will believe something. What is it that you want to believe? In whom do you believe?

Jesus said whoever believes in Me will not perish but will have everlasting life.

Not long after this Jesus was killed and three days later He arose from the dead.

He is the Resurrection and the Life. The one who believes in Him will live even if he dies.